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REVOLUTIONARY SOMALIA IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD

— A Real Assessment of our Revolutionary Actions

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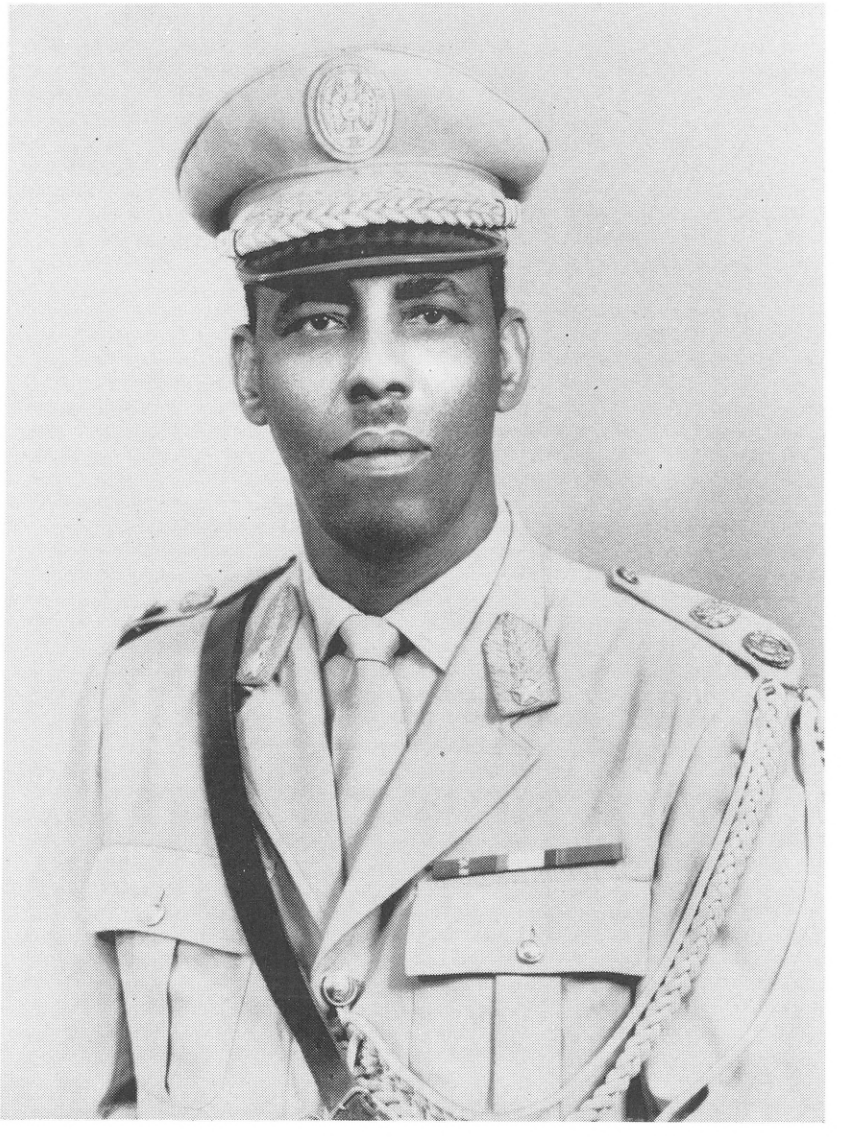

Jaalle Major-General MOHAMED SIYAD BARRE
President of the Supreme
Revolutionary Council

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INTRODUCTION

Somalia, called by the ancients 'The Land of Punt', lies at the most easterly tip of the African Continent known as the Horn of Africa. It is strategically well placed, to the North is the Red Sea and Suez Canal, to the South and East is the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean. This puts the Somali Peninsula at the Southern approaches of the busiest shipping lane in the world second only to the North Atlantic. During the colonial period, the Somali Peninsula was almost kept isolated by the colonizers. This could be ascribed to a number of factors which are basically related to the interests of the colonialists.

The British were only interested in the Somali coast to safeguard their military base in Aden which also served as an important refuelling port. The Italians who claimed sovereignty over the Indian Ocean sea-board were not only a bit out of the beaten track but were never interested in publicising their fascist methods and land policies which

deprived a million peasants from their agricultural homelands. The French in Djibouti were in a way eclipsed by the more prosperous entrepot in Aden.

The Dervish Liberation Movement of Sayid Mohamed Abdulle Hassan from 1901 to 1920 did bring world notice to the fierce freedom-lovers of the Dervish Liberation Movement. But the heroic deeds of the Somali fighters never received their due acknowledgement since all news bulletins were one-sided and only related in colonialist dispatches and official reports. The British colonizers thus made sure to suppress anything that favoured Somali interest. They were in fact much vexed to be forced to spend so much military hardware in chasing dervishes that defied the rule of the British Empire.

The defeat of the Somali dervishes in 1920 through aerial bombardment was succeeded by systematic imposition and consolidation of colonial oppression over the Somali territories.

The Somali nation was divided into five parts by Britain, France, Italy and Ethiopia. In 1960, the Italian and British occupied Somali territories attained Independence and formed the present 'Somali Democratic Republic'.

Independence and re-unification in 1960 heralded a decade of successive reactionary civilian regimes and recalcitrant politicians. The chains of neo-colonialism were spread. Even those citizens with the best of intentions found themselves inadvertantly propelled into a vortex of corruption, nepotism, tribalism and personal interests. The more one tried to keep himself out of this socio-political quagmire, the deeper one sank into it.

The Somali people were truly disillusioned, their hopes and aspirations became like an ever-receding mirage, Their long struggle for freedom connoted an exercise in futility. The nationalistic movements, thoughts and actions were abhored. Individualistic and tribalistic interests were admired an pampered. The policy of "Divide and Rule" was expertly executed.

The economy of the country went into a limbo. Ministers trotted the globe hat in hand. Magnificent paper plans that never took off the ground appeared in quick succession. International press derisively termed Somalia as the "graveyard of foreign aid".

On 21st October, 1969, the Benevolent Revolution was born under the leadership of Jaalle Major General Mohamed Siyad Barre. It was a Revolution that swept away all forms of corruptious elements, such as tribalism, nepotism, multipartism, misappropriation of public funds, injustices and maladministration in general.

The First Charter of the Revolution was pronounced with 13 articles to form the cardinal principles of our internal and external policies. The articles are the following:

A - INTERNAL POLICY

1. To constitute a Society based on the right of work and on principle of social justice considering the environments and social life of the Somali people;
2. To prepare and orientate the development of economic, social and cultural programme to reach a rapid progress of the country;
3. Liquidation of illiteracy and to develop an englightened patrimonial and cultural heritage of the Somali people;
4. To constitute with appropriate and adequate measures the basic development of the writing of the Somali language;
5. Liquidation of all kinds of corruption, all forms of anarchy, the malicious system of tribalism in every form and every other phenomena of bad customs in State Activities;
6. To abolish all political parties; and
7. To conduct at appropriate time free and impartial election.

B. - EXTERNAL POLICY

1. Support for international solidarity and national liberation movements;
2. Oppose and fight against all forms of colonialism and neo-colonialism;
3. To struggle to maintain the Somali National Unity;
4. To recognise strongly the principles of Peaceful Coexistence between all peoples;
5. To continue and preserve the policy of Positive Neutrality; and
6. To respect and recognise all legal international commitments undertaken by the Somali Republic.

The Nationalization of foreign-owned banks and major enterprises in May 1970 soon made imperialism and its indigenous lackeys realize that our Revolutionary leaders want economic development. Imperialist machinations and plots flourished but the valiant Somali people were not going to repeat the same mistakes. They came to know with the help of constant, massive orientation where their interests lay. The adoption of scientific socialism as a socio-economic system in a predominantly Moslem society has become a historic decision that proved once and for all that the basic tenets of Islam can be reconciled with scientific socialism. Other major decisions since then that brought fundamental political and cultural transformations included the adoption of writing of the Somali Language in Latin Script and joining the Arab League in February 1974. Compulsory universal education was announced on Youth Day, May 15, 1974.

The historic cornerstones in this brief outline of Somalia's political development since the turn of the century had all been tentatively reported in the world press. But never before the last four years of the Revolution has the international mass media taken the trouble to devote any length of time or space to the political, social and economic activities in the Somali Democratic Republic.

Revolutionary Somalia has gained many friends among the peace-loving peoples of the world; its respect and prestige has risen among the liberation movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America. As the delegate of the Palestinian Liberation Organization at the April Conference in Mogadishu of the World Progressive Youth said: 'Somalia has become a mecca for freedom fighters».

This booklet is a simple collection of Somalia's position in the World Press. There are extracts from various newspapers and magazines that had reported on Somalia's economic, political and social development since the Revolution. The opinions in these press cuttings are as varied as the editorial opinions of those who wrote them but they give the reader a general view of Somalia in the eyes of foreigners who visited our country or who heard about it.

Jaalle Col. ISMAIL ALI ABOKOR

Vice-President of the SRC
and Secretary of State for Information
and National Guidance.

IMPRESSIONS

The third quarter of this century had witnessed more independent countries around the globe than ever before. The liberation of numerous developing nations from the shackles of colonialism made Independence Day a memorable event throughout these countries. Political independence was not however the end of imperialism's tune of glory. Neo-colonialism and economic domination took over the cue-line where old colonizers left off. The corrupt practices and political maladminition of pre-independence civilian regimes set the stage for the inception of democratic revolutions in many progressive countries. Where this happened Revolution Day celebrations emphasized the attainment of complete independence. On such occasions, pressmen stream to the country concerned hunting for the unusual and telexing their impressions back to their papers and magazines.

In the last four years of our Revolution many journalists visited Somalia each taking back impressions of

what he saw and heard. The anniversary celebrations of the Blessed 21 October Revolution in particular gained wide attraction of the world press. One European journalist wrote the following article in LES AFRICAINES after visiting Somalia during the Revolution's Fourth Anniversary Celebrations on 21 October 1973:

> «From the plane, which has to do a large semicircle to land in Mogadishu, the traveller discovers a a town, facing the Indian Ocean, and from there, going towards slightly hilly country.
>
> «No sky-scrapers to spoil the harmony of the countryside, and as far as the eye can see, there are no slums which disfigure other large agglomerations. Seen from the sky, the capital of Somalia gives the impression of being a city of human dimensions, well-balanced, confining great masses in a small space, ready to jump on the crums falling from the centre of business and administration.
>
> «This impression of balance is strengthened everywhere. Around the plane which has just landed, there is no noisy confusion. The landing operations are carried out calmly, orderly.... The welcome by the protocol service is discrete and courteous : "You are welcome you are at home".»

Fleeting impressions could be dangerous in the way of correctly assessing character or the socio-political enviornment that condition the economic development of a certain country. But a good journalist is so trained that he stands a better chance than most people to guess accurately which way the wind blows. PIERRE HEIM (PIERRE LAMBILLON) wrote the following article in LE METROPOLE after watching a TV programme on Somalia and without ever setting foot on Somali soil:

> «The television of «visa for the world» made known to the Belgians, one of the poorest, least-known and most deserving countries in young Africa. Being

poor and unknown is the case of many countries of the Third World. None of them deserve this, all of them deserve to be known, understood and helped. The Somali Democratic Republic, in particular, which was formed in 1960 by the merging of two ancient colonial territories, Italian Somalia, and British Somaliland, since 1960 bravely contributes to its own economic future.

«In spite of the habits and traces left by the colonial powers, the Somali keeps his specific charecteristics and originality. 'We were conquered, but we took out the best, and molded it to suit us, to add it to our ancestral behaviour, and our civilisation, colonialism only represents a n epiphenomenon» and it did not touch our deep nationality. This is what today's intelligentsia says, which means to keep its heritage, while adopting the needs of a modern world.

«It would be ridiculous, during a brief journey, to have a definite judgement. The traveller brings back mainly impressions, some of which are re-inforced by impartial opinions, generally taken out of the mouth of foreigners with the habit of the people and national custom.

«Nevertheless, evidences appear, order reigns, without the displeasures arising above every-day strive in a community. The law is respected, justice is applied, the army, the teaching groups and the magistrature have great civil activities.»

Ulli Mwambulukutu, a Tanzania journalist, is most fascinated by the magical look of Mogadishu life on writing the following article in the DAILY NEWS (October 30, 1973):

«The moment you arrive in Mogadishu, the capital of the Somali Democratic Republic, you can't help

being fascinated by the enthusiasm that overwhelms you wherever you go.

«Here and there people are as busy as bees trying to put in as much work as possible into the day's chores which extend well into the night. This is because after official working hours they still have plenty to do at home.

«You climb into the car and you are ready for Mogadishu by night. It is some magical night I can assure you. In this festive mood, the streets are very properly lit. Life-size portraits of Jaalle President Siyad Barre stare you right in the face as do several other paintings depicting revolutionary achievements.

«The streets are reasonably wide and are lined with white-fenced buildings allowing only for space where people normally gather to quietly sip their coffee, tea, grape-fruit juice or an occasional coke. The Somalis are not fond of alcoholic carrousing.

«Residents have been mobilized into believing that it is their responsibility to see to it that areas surrounding their homes are as clean as possible.

«On every street people (women, men and children) are busy removing sand from the roads as they sing some melodious Somali tunes.

«"You seem to be surprised at this," Abdillah (the guide) told us, "this is but a very small part of our spirit of Iska-wah-U-Qabso (self-reliance). There is more in store for you".»

Horst Schotzki of the German Democratic Republic is a member of the editorial board of HORIZONT and visited Somalia three times which helped give him a better perspective. This article appeared in HORIZONT after his visit to Somalia on 21 October 1973:

«An invitation extended by the Government of Somalia on the occasion of the 4th Anniversary of the Revolution of October 1969 offered a welcome opportunity for a visit to that East African State. This was my third trip to Somalia within the last four years, which created possibilities to make comparisons.

«In conformity with the grand occasion, Mogadishu receives its guests with festive decorations. The colourful picture is dominated by countless small and big flags, the five-point white star on blue ground — Somalia's national flag — and the red-blue colours of the capital. To be sure, any capital will be more attractive than usual in its festive dress but Somalia's metropolis can show its everyday appearance as well without the least fear; the "white pearl" of the Indian Ocean shines brighter than four years ago. At that time its brilliance had become dull.

«I still remember very well my first visit to Mogadishu. Nearly always a layer of fumes and dust towered over the city, raised by the quasi-permanent slight breeze which brings in some cooling from the Indian Ocean. The wind still blows, but the cloud of dust has disappeared; it was fiercely attacked and driven away.

«All mainstreets and also many side-streets have long been asphalted, and the golden sand dunes were planted with cactuses and shrubbery of low subsistence level, impeding the wind to play with the quicksand which is a nuisance to people. Here the traveller, only four years ago, had to stay in a not very comfortable lodging and was hardly delighted when, for instance, salt water came flowing out of the shower instead of the fresh water he had expected, there is today the new Juba Hotel which can rightly be described as meeting all requirements even from the viewpoint of high international standards.»

In the last four years of the Revolution, Somalia played host to the Heads of State of Sudan, Tanzania, People's Republic of Congo, Zaire, Uganda, Liberia, United Arab Emirates, Libya, the Vice-President of Democratic People's Republic of Korea, World Bank President, McNamara, UN Secretary General, Dr. Waldheim, OAU Secretary General, Nzo Ekangaki, Director General of FAO, and many other special envoys. Meanwhile the SRC President received in his office delegations from the Arab world, Guinea, Nigeria, Cuba, USSR, People's Republic of China, etc., etc.. Numerous SRC members, Secretaries of State and other high officials also paid frequent visits to friendly nations to cement economic, social and cultural relations.

All those distinguished visitors have departed with new impressions about Revolutionary Somalia, impressions that erased or updated any previous notions they had about Somalia and Somalis. Pratically all visitors commented on the vigorous socialist task underway in our country, but space will not allow us to jot down all what had been said about Somalia on this score.

To take several typical examples, the UN Secretary General, Dr. Kurt Waldheim, who briefly visited Somalia in January 1972 at the head of the entire UN Security Council had this to say to Jaalle Major-General Mohamed Siyad Barre, President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council:

> «To us in the United Nations, your country has become an example because of your concern for the betterment of human conditions and insurance of peace for all mankind... Your country has entered into history in the short period of your leadership because you have gone along the correct path in the betterment of your people's conditions.»

President Jean-Bedel Bokassa of Central African Republic said before his departure after his State visit to Somalia in August 1972:

«I am very pleased indeed to be with you. I am particularly pleased to see, here in Somalia a great people that is firmly united behind an ideal and a unique leader. The adoption of socialism by Africa will be a great victory for her. Any African state that does not opt for the socialist system is bound to suffer.»

While in Mogadishu, President Numeiry of Sudan said this on the Somali Revolution:

«The May and October Revolutions were ignited for the sake of the Sudanese and Somali peoples. Both Revolutions have common objectives that aim at the elimination of poverty, ignorance and disease.»

The President of the United Arab Emirate, H.H. Al-Sheikh Zayid Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, during his visit to Somalia in November, 1972, said:

«During my stay here I have witnessed tremendous progress in the country... Despite the efforts of the colonialists to separate us our traditional relations have continued to flourish through the ages. The fact that 4,000 Somalis are living in the UAE like Arab citizens is an eloquent testimony to the deep rooted relations between our two countries.»

While in Mogadishu, President Tolbert of Liberia, deeply impressed by development progress and positive action of the Somali people said this in Nov. 1972:

«I am sure the spirit enkindled throughout the country, as a result of Jaalle Siyad's deep and sincere motivation will bring greater prosperity and development to this country and to its people and they will make their contributions for the solidarity of Africa and the world.»

On 15th Nov. 1972, the President of the World Bank, McNamara came to Somalia and said this:

«My visit has been short but it has been most impressive, most fascinating, and most enjoyable... I think a unifed self-reliant people determined to achieve their own destiny and their own development, with wise leadership and prudent management of our finances, which was so much in evidence deserved the full assistance of the world's development agencies.»

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Jaalle Siyad speaking on the role of the press at a press conference in Entebbe on 12 Oct. 1972 said:

> «What is the role of the press? Your role is not to report stories as you want them to be, but as stories have to be reported factually and with no distortions.»

AFRICA MAGAZINE has in fact written more on Somalia than any other magazine or newspaper. It has given comprehensive coverage to all aspects of current development in the political, economic and social fields, but in order to appeal to wide readership it has also taken an ambivalent stand on the most favoured subjects of western pressmen where Somalia is concerned. These include the propaganda-value of having friendly relations with socialist powers or even worse (according to them!) adopting socialism, and the age-old territorial dispute between the Somali Democratic Republic and our neighbours.

The concerted efforts of imperialist propaganda against Somalia had been vividly portrayed by Felix Kaiza (Sunday News *of Tanzania, August 26, 1973) who wrote under the title «A LESSON FOR AFRICA».*

«What do you think of Somalia today? Is your opinion the same as the one you held about three years ago? Or do you hold no opinion and just end it there?

«If your opinion on this country in the Horn of Africa is still bright and shining you must be a lucky man. You have not fallen prey to the predatory imperial manouvres.

«When one mentions the world imperialism today, some of us literally do not take notice of it. It is just one of those wrods which escape our attention. For, we have already been bred to take it as just one of those prostituted word. This makes it possible for genuine cases to go unnoticed. One of these genuine cases, of course according to my view is imperialist action against Somalia? But why this?

«It is the country's selected line of development that made imperialists come all-out to fight for their survival. President Siyad Barre's own words «Socialism is a necessity for Africa» and their subsequent implementation set Somalia under the special lenses of the imperialist world.

«The action must have been automatic — a reflex action of capitalism. For, socialism is an enemy of capitalism. Where it triumphs capitalism must die. And if it sweeps the African continent where also would the capitalist world find its cheap source of raw materials and market for its expensive commodities?

«It is Somalia's out-line socialist policy that has exposed the Somali people to all sorts of enemy action to the extent that some of us have started to cast some

doubt on this nation that is genuinely African and for Africa.

«If this campaign was only to damage the Somali image in the capitalist world one could not have cared the least. What makes it worse is that this is mainly calculated to put the relations between this country and its neighbours aflame — even the sensitive field of religion! But why all this, And why now?

«When Somalia launched the socialist revolution in October, four years ago, of course the imperialist world adopted a wait-and-see attitude — just in case this turned out to be one of those 'socialisms' that give room to capitalism.

«But things did not work out that way. Somalia went further. It took control of the national economy. Major economic concerns were nationalized. The extent to which the capitalist world could have exploited the country was almost reduced to zero. This policy coupled with a big drive towards self-reliance put the imperialist world in an unfavourable position.

«The imperialists did not lose hope. They waited to see if Somalia would fall on her knees in search for capital but nothing was forthcoming. Economic pressures were mounted. Aid was stopped but to no avail. For, there is visible economic growth taking place.

«Another weapon had to be devised. This is the word. And this is what has been going on. The propaganda was mainly concentrated in the period between November last year (shortly after the Third Anniversary Celebrations of the Revolution) to March this year (a few months before the OAU summit in Addis Ababa).

«"LE MONDE" (March 12) told the world that the French Defence Minister had indicated the instal-

ment in Somalia of Soviet missiles SAM-3, the missiles used by the Vietnamese to down the US B-52 bombers.

«The report was picked up by "TEMPO" in Rome eleven days later.

«The BBC World Service in its 'Focus on Africa' programme (March 4) said, " tension was building up along the border between Kenya and Somalia". It said: "Somalis were reinforcing their position along the border and were moving regiments and transferring bomber squadrons for much more struggle positions towards the coast"».

«The 'DAILY TELEGRAPH' had made it worse earlier in February. It said: "Kenya and Ethiopia are strengthening ground and air forces in fear of renewed guerrilla border attack from neghbouring Russian-armed Somalia. It is considered that Somalia is preparing a new border campaign to diffuse an internal political crisis over its failed economic policies."

'DIE WELT' was very quick to make a live echo of the story a day later.

«A bulletin that has managed to keep the continent quiet about its activities «AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL» (March 2) said: 'There have been reports of heavy arms shipments from Arab sources to the Somali Democratic Republic.» (I would have thought that if there is any part of the world that has not a single bullet to spare it is the Arab world. But we are told it is making heavy arms shipments.)

«And to crown it all the 'CATHOLIC MIRROR» (November 1972) told a public lie that was even denounced by the Vatican. It said: «all Catholic missions in Somalia have been closed and all missionaries, priests and nuns, were in protective custody in Mogadishu pending departure from the country.

REJOINDER:

«If this means anything to Africa it must serve as a lesson for us. We must ask ourselves why we have agreed to jump on one another's necks because of overseas reports? Why have we agreed to be put in a positoin whereby we create a ready market for the western armaments? Don't we really have a way out?

«Surely we do. We must learn to live as one Africa. Africans must treat themselves as brothers and avoid the imperialists ill-devised propaganda machinations and the baseless and inciting fabrications which they aim at creating enmity and hatred among us.»

Somalia is not alone of course, we have friends: VLADIR BULINOV, a Soviet Journalist was answering an article entitled «INCREASED STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE» that appeared in AFRISCOPE, another monthly (published by Pan-Afriscope (Nigeria) Limited,) which claims "authentic brief on Africa". This letter appeared in its issue of May 1973 :

«I have recently read an article entitled 'increased Strategic Importance' in your magazine, which in my view gives me a completely wrong evaluation of Soviet-Somali relations. Since I spent the last few years in Somalia and am naturally interested in the events going on there, I could not help paying attention to the article and offering the following rejoinder.

«The author of the mentioned article takes a biased look at the picture of Soviet-Somali relations, thus misinterpreting the nature of the all-round assistance which the Soviet Union gives to the Democratic Republic of Somalia, creating the impression that Somalia has become dependent on this aid.

«To correct the author I would cite the following lines from the Soviet-Somali communique of November 23, 1971, which characterizes the essence of the relations between the two states. The sides were gratified to note that the USSR and the SDR, and

their peoples, maintain relations of sincere friendship and close cooperation in various spheres, relations that are based on the principles of respect for independence, territorial integrity, sovereignty, equality, and non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. They reaffirmed their desire to continue expanding economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries.

«It was also stressed in the communique that the further development of Soviet-Somali economic and technical cooperation would promote the strengthening of the public sector in Somalia's natinal economy and the elimination of the consequences of the colonial past in the economy of the Democratic Republic of Somalia.

«Furthermore, the auther of the article alleges that the USSR has agreed to build a dam in the lower reaches of the Juba river as a «prestige aid project.» On this, the mentioned communique reads that the implementation of the project of the step-by-step development of lands in the area and the erection of the dam with irrigation structures would be of major importance for the development of agricultural production. The Somali people themselves call this project a second Aswan.

«I shall take the liberty of citing the following statement by General Mohamed Ali Samatar, Vice-President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council and a prominent Somali statesman, regarding the nature of Soviet aid: «Since the economic aid which the Soviet Union gives us is not conditioned by any selfish motives, we are receiving it with gratitude. As for the technical projects, in the implementation of which the USSR will help us, they, first and foremost, include the construction of a hydro-scheme and reclamation of land in the lower reaches of the Juba river. The implementation of these projects will help us satisfy our requirements in foodstuffs and will even allow us to export surplus products.»

«The HORSED, an independent Somali newspaper, holds the following view: «The Soviet Union has always been and remains a true friend of Somalia, as well as all of Africa and all the developing countries. The Soviet Union has given the SDR enormous assistance in the economic and educational spheres, which is giving a strong impetus to our development. The alliance and the bilateral cooperation between Somalia and the USSR are not only important, they are a historical necessity for the developing countries which are constantly threatened by international imperialism. The imperialist threats vary from outright aggressions to financing counter-revolutionary conspiracies, connected with the aim of overthrowing the progressive regimes.»

«That is why», the paper stresses, «the close relations between these countries and the socialist states are a most important and effective means of safeguarding their progressive economic and political measures.»

«To this I want to add that at present Somalia's cooperation with the Soviet Union embraces a wide range of economic, technical, cultural, trade and other spheres.

«The SDR and the USSR hold identical stands on the most important international problems. For example, they consider the armed struggle waged by the national liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Guinea-Bissau, Rhodesia to be just, and that this struggle is the only means by which the peoples of these countries can achieve liberation.

«The USSR and Somalia are in favour of the immediate cessation of the war in Indo-china. Both vigorously censure Israel's aggression in the Middle East and are of the opinion that peace in this part of the globe may be restored if Israel fulfils the UN Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967.

«The fact, that the author of the article, who prefers to remain anonymous, does not say a word about the radical progressive changes carried out in the country's political and economic life after the 1969 revolution, is indicative of his obvious partiality. In the meantime the public sector in Somalia's national economy is being strengthened and expanded, and the country's internal resources are mobilized and used for the up-lift of the economy. The country is also successfully solving tasks connected with the abolition of aftermaths of the colonial past in the cultural, health services and public education spheres. Thus, the nationalization of foreign banks, and major companies, and the introduction of monopoly of foreign trade have resulted in a considerable consolidation of Somalia's financial position: between 1969 and 1971 its currency reserves have gone up fourhold and amount to 160 million Somali shillings.

«A reputable magazine recently wrote quite aptly the following about the aims and plans which the Revolutionary Somali Government is pursuing and the attitude towards them of the broad popular masses: «Great changes have been introduced since the time of the revolution in Somalia. Proceeding from real possibilities, the government has worked out a state development plan and has mapped out a number of priority projects. At the present time it is directing its efforts to developing agricultural production, the ore mining industry, the training of skilled personnel.

«The article "Increased Strategic Importance", contains quite a number of inventions regarding the assistance which the Soviet Union gives to the Democratic Republic of Somalia in the strengthening of its defence capacity. In particular, the author of the article attempts to present the master as if this assistance is directed against Somalia's neighbours — Kenya and Ethiopia. However, there is not a grain of truth in it. This allegation aims at causing distrust between the countries. The Soviet Union does not have, nor

is it building any military bases in Somalia, though some Western powers have naval and military air bases in countries neighbouring on Somalia.

«The author of the article makes the unsubstantiated statement that «for some time Soviet warships and other vessels have made considerable use of Somali ports.»

«Under the title of 'RED NEST IN THE HORN OF AFRICA' (The Scotsman, January 3, 1974) Anthony Sylvester warns the West against the liberal support and assistance given by the USSR and People's China to the Somalis. The British has perfected a method of insinuating and implying without seemingly giving offence — that of course is very un-British. But it is cricket to say that Jaalle President Mohamed Siyad Barre is «a burly military man», suggesting authoritarianism, an impression this journalist got on being received by the SRC President «in his well-guarded home» implying insecurity brought about by martial rule, but is understandable considering the British aversion toward any meddling of military men with political affairs. The arms of capitalist countries are nothing more than institutionalized mercenaries which are paid to suppress the toiling masses and wage oppressive wars against the peace-loving peoples of the world. The Somali Revolution's policy of self-reliance is miscontrued as tightening of belts which is attributed to 'Arab oil cutbacks'.»

Mr. Sylvester also tries to exploit the fact that Somali nomads criss-cross the de-facto borders and cleverly reasons this to mean that «the demands made on their (Somalism) patriotism are too much & they quietly move out, taking their families and camels across the ill-guarded frontiers....».

Newspapers, magazines and journals from the Arab world had their impressions about the progress in in the building of our nation. AL-AKHBAAR of Egypt,

AL-AHRAAM of Egypt,- AL-DALIIA of Kuwait, AL-THAQAAFA of Syria, 14th OCTOBER of PDRY, AL-HADAF of Palestine, AL-AKHBAAR of Lebanon and numerous others which space would not allow us to mention have widely commented on the achievements of our blessed Revolution.

Commenting on the application of «Self-Help policy» in the construction of our Nation and the vigorous participation of the people the 14th OCTOBER of PDRY said on 17.11.1973.

«The people in Somalia are busily engaged in new construction everywhere you visit, you find multitudes of people constructing a project in order to speed the construction of their NEW SOMALIA under the leadership of the October Revolution. The people are the driving force behind the revolution and are determined to make good the loss incurred during the civilian reactionary governments after independence and eliminate all colonialistic heritages. Today, the Somali people are determined to build their nation with their own available resources, with their mind, muscle and limited material means.

«The most commendable measure you see is the active mass participation of the Somali womenfolk in all activities of the country. This is so because the Revolution had declared that men and women have equal rights and equal contribution towards the building-up of the nation. So the Somali people, under the Octobre Revolution, are actively building the country with a strong determination».

When commenting on the Somali Artists, the **14th October** of the PDRY said : «The Somali Artists are the mirror that reflects the continual struggle of the Somali masses against the old reactionary attitudes. They are seen opening a new page in the history of the Somali culture and this is due to the new policies of the Somali Revolution. From a mere amusement purpose, the role of the artists had been changed to a profession of great respect and contribution geared to express the hopes and ambitions of the broad masses. Today, the artists receive enough support and en-

couragement from the Revolutionary Government — a measure which is in complete contrast with the support from the former civilian reactionary Governments.»

Al-Daliia a magazine from Kuwait made the following remarks : «The Somali people had often strenghtened the brotherly relations with the people of Kuwait. Particularly, the Somali people and their Government in the era of October Revolution never failed to express and extend their support to the Arab cause against Israel and also extended any assistance which the Kuwaitian people asked the Somali people.

«The Revolutionary Government of Somalia time and again expressed its policy against all forms of colonialism and imperialism and its support to the UN resolution on the restoration of Arab lands occupied by Israel to its rightful people.»

Al-Thaqaafa of Syria wrote : «The brotherly ties between the peoples of Syria and Somalia are growing stronger and stronger day after day. This is expressed by the obvious and clear support of the Somali people at the time of the war which Israel declared against Syria in October 1973. The Somali people showed their determination to support the Syrian people in the battle by listening to the news of the battles from Arab broadcasts in order to follow the positions of the war. Many Somali volunteers registered their names in order to take part in the war to defend the rights of their brothers — the Arab Nations. When this became impossible for the broad masses, people and Government provided material support (foodstuffs) to the Arab fighters.»

An Egyptian Journalist, Hussein Fahmi of **Al-Akhbaar** wrote an article under the heading «the Land of Punt» in which he said : «In the past history or in the present history there has been true Somali-Arab link. The relations between Somalia and Egypt has deep rooted ties and back-dates to the era of Egyptian Pharoahs till the October Revolution.

Somalia was the source of perfumes and different productions of incence imported to Egypt. All these created the curiousity of Queen Hatsapshut to visit the «Land of Punt» leading a strong delegation. However, the Somali-Arab relations existed before the emergence of Islam.

«The Somalis and the Arabs suffered a lot from colonialism, imperialism and all their heritage which they had fought against their prevalence. In the 80s of the past century, Arabi led a revolution in Egypt, Mahdi in Sudan, Sanosi in Libya and Mohamed Abdalla Hassan in Somalia to gain independence by armed struggle. Mohamed set up a strong movement of Darawish to liberate his country from colonialism and thence the British called him the «Mad mullah» of Somalia for his courageous nationalistic military ability.

POLITICAL AWARENESS

One of the basic pledges of our Revolution is to promote world peace. «To recognise strongly the principle of peaceful co-existence between all peoples», as enshrined in the First Charter of the Revolution determines Somalia's unequivocal stand in this respect. The peacemaking initiative of the SRC President in the Tanzania-Uganda border tension in mid 1972 was received by the world press with a mixture of skepticism and pure envy. AFRICA was no different in doubting Somalia's ability to map out a safe course in these uncharted waters. An article on this subject, under the title of "MEDIATOR'S TROUBLES" appeared in its issue No. 22 June 1973:

> «The five-point agreement of October 1, 1972, signed by Tanzania Foreign Minister John Malecela and Ugandan Foreign Minister, Wanume Kibedi, on behalf of their respective governments, in the presence, among others, of President Siyad Barre of Somalia and OAU administrative secretary general Nzo Ekangaki, was a package deal that depended for success upon the creation of a favourable climate.
>
> «The accord was: (1) to cease forthwith all military operations of any kind against each other's territory and to withdraw not later than 19 October,

1972 all their military forces to a distance not less than 10 km from the common boundary, such withdrawal to be witnessed by observers sent from Somalia by General Siyad, in consultation with both Presidents General Amin and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere; (2) to halt immediately hostile propaganda directed against each other through radio, TV and press; (3) to refrain from harbouring or allowing subversive forces to operate in the territory of one state against the other; (4) to release nationals or property, if any, of the other state held by either side; and (5) to make these pledges effective at 8 p.m. on October, 7, 1972».

In comparison, ZAMBIA DAILY MAIL (August 31, 1973) published a long article under the heading «Somalia — working for peace in Africa». The article reported in depth the positive role Somalia played in the African political scene within the few years of the Revolution. On the successful peace initiative of Somalia the paper wrote:

«The crisis which flared between the two sister states of Uganda and Tanzania, was the concern of every African, who is worthy of that name. If allowed to develop it could have endengered the peace and security of not only East Africa but the whole of the African continent. Realizing this, the Somali Democratic Republic immediately decided to intervene and offered its good offices to the two sister states. The reasons which led the Somali Democratic Republic to taks this line of action are the following:

1. The fraternal relations which Somalia maintains with both Uganda and Tanzania;

2. Its closeness to the troubled areas;

3. Its belief that all types of disputes that could arise between any two African states could be solved through negotiation, mediation and arbitration;

4. Both countries are progressive members of the OAU;

5. Its policy to keep the unity of Africans so that the imperialists and racists may not benefit from our disunity;

6. Its belief that disputes between African states will slow down the war of liberation particularly when countries bordering the racist minority regimes are parties to such disputes; and

7. The time element.

«After taking this decision, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Jaalle Omer Arteh Ghalib, was despactched to Uganda and Tanzania with a five-point peace plan worked out by Jaalle Major General Mohamed Siyad Barre. After the necessary consulations with Presidents Nyerere and Amin, the two parties to the dispute responded positively to the mediation effort by the Somali Democratic Republic and consequently agreed to send full powers to work out the details of a peace plan submitted by Somalia.

«These talks were held in Mogadishu in October 1972 under the chairmanship of Jaalle Arteh, who budided the deliberations of the meeting to a successful conclusion and in the presence of the administrative Secretary General of the OAU who was invited by the Somali Democratic Republic to be present for the talks.

«The success of the peace talks was indeed a blow to the imperialists and colonialists who would like to see Africa weak and divided so that they may exploit our weakness and misunderstanding for their own selfish ends. Above all, it was a blow to the racist minority regimes in southern Africa and their allies, who hoped for a prolongation of the crisis in the hope that the war of liberation being waged will

be weakened. It is no secret that more than other OAU member states, the Republic of Tanzania has been committed to this war of liberation and in fact acted as a springboard for regular attacks against racist minority regimes in the south.

«Consequently any prolongation of the crisis would have weakened the liberation struggle. This possibility necessitated the immediate cessation of hostilities between the two sister countries.

«Soon after the signature of the Mogadishu peace pledge, Jaalle Major General Mohamed Siyad Barre, President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, paid a visit to both Tanzania and Uganda, where he held discussions with Presidents Nyerere and Amin to ensure the implementation of the pledge. In Dar es Salaam and Kampala, Presidents Nyerere and Amin assured President Siyad that they are fully committed to the implementation of the agreement.

«This assurance was manifested in the steps taken by Tanzania and Uganda. Where the two states ceased all military operations immediately after the signing of the peace agreement. Moreover, the two sides withdrew their forces to a distance of not less than 10 km. from their own common border.

'After the signing of the peace accord in Mogadishu, the two sides effected the cessation of hostile propaganda directed against each other through radio, TV and Press. This naturally removed from the way a source of friction which to a great extent plagued the relations between the two countries. In fact since then, the two governments have ensured that no hostile propaganda is carried in their respective mass media whether government or privately owned.»

AFRICA is in fact one of the few magazine that constantly gives extensive coverage to the revolutionary activities in the Somali Democratic Republic. On 21

October 1973, i.e. the Fourth Anniversary of the Revolution, SRC President Jaalle Siyad said in his national speech on the occasion that:

«We have reached a stage where the political consciousness of our masses can protest our revolution from the infilleration of harmful elements. We should therefore fulfil our promise of transferring power to them. I am happy to announce that in the coming future a **congress of our working masses,** organized by the best elements of the Political Office, will be convened to decide on the form, structure and content of a true socialist party».

Commenting on this, the magazine wrote in its issue No. 28 of December 1973:

«When President Mohamed Siyad Barre announced on the fourth anniversary of his regime last October 21 a plan for the formation of a Somali political party, this must have seemed an overdue measure to many of his countrymen. There is little doubt that Somalia, now in the heat of economic development, needs a broadly-based political organization to safeguard the stability of the government. President Barre explained that the Somali people were now «ripe for politics and ready to found their own political party.» It is understood that a congress of Somalia's working people will be called shortly to lay down a formula for, and chart the progress of, a properly organized political movement.

«It would be clearly wrong to describe Major-General Barre's regime as merely a military dictatorship, even though Army men remain in key positions of authority. Since the discredited civilian government was toppled by a bloodless coup four years ago, a great deal has already been done to bring government and politics to grass-root levels, in villages as well as towns. National Guidance Centres have been established up and down the country; in Mogadishu itself

these can now be founed in the 14 city districts. An additional arm of government control is the people's malitia, the 'guulwadayasha', or Victory Pioneers. These are, in turn, supervised by the Political Office of the Presidency of the Supreme Revolutionary Council and as public support for self-help projects and rendering other social, political and security matters.

«The mounting significance of self-help schemes has demonstrated a high degree of political maturity and national awareness on the part of the Somali people while at the same time providing fresh argument for a well-organized political movement which would channel popular enthusiasm. The recent success of such schemes has no doubt been one of the reasons for the present decision to form a political party as a vanguard in the socialist transformation of Somalia.»

HORIZONT commented that the announcement of founding a workers congress became the focus of visiting pressmen and other distinguished visitors in the fourth anniversary of the Revolution. The paper's correspondent was also quick to notice that the celebrations put the emphasis on social progress rather than military might as is common in other countries.

«In a speech marking the 4th anniversary of the 1969 Revolution, President Siyad Barre announced it was time to create a political force which in the future should assume the leading and decisive role in the development of the political and social conditions in the Democratic Republic of Somalia. General Siyad said the task now was to form a «truly socialist party». A congress of representatives of all working sections of the nation to be held in the near future should decide on the establishment, the tasks and goals of such a party.

«This new accent also became apparent in the celebrations themselves. While the parade of the armed forces was undoubtedly the climax of the festi-

vities as recently as two years ago, this time the procession was led on by contingents representing the masses of the people, with the women marching not accidentally at the head. They were followed by groups of sportsmen, the trade unions, the Pioneers called in Somalia «flowers of the revolution» and whose clothes consist of blue shorts or skirts, white shirts or blouses and blue scarves; then came the volunteers of the Crash Programme and the Guulwadayal, an organization of young people who have inscribed the propagation and defence of the revolution's ideals on their banner, do political illuminating work and not unfrequently assume militia-like tasks.

«The announcement of the foundation of a socialist party was, of course, the main conversation subject among the invited guests and journalists, and was also central to a press conference where General Siyad Barre readily answered questions concerning Somalia's domestic and foreign policies. General Siyad said he could not yet give precise indications as to the timing of the envisaged congress and to organizational details of the future party. This would be subject to deliberation and decisions of the committee preparing the foundation of the political party. It was clear, however, that the future party would be based on scientific socialism and integrate all traditions of the country. Thus there would not be any contradiction between Islam and socialism, as there must not be any exploitation of man by man in the new Somali society. The matter was not, President Siyad Barre said, to take over anything but to embark on a road which does not conflict with the traditions of the Somali people.»

LES AFRICAINES rightly admits that Somalia's adoption of scientific socialism upset westerners but it gives no reasons how this could also be a laughing matter — if not of course a hysterical laughter:

«We have chosen scientific socialism because it is the only way to rapidly transforming the country into a developed and economically advanced nation». This proclamation is hung in the reception of the airport in Mogadishu. It is signed by Jaalle SIYAD (Comrade Siyad), who is the father of the Revolution. To be frank; these words 'scientific socialism' can upset or make westerners laugh.»

There is no need to elaborate on why Mr. Rake of Gemini News Service adds «red» notices and more so «little» ones to express his aversion toward anything that suggests socialist struggle:

«Everywhere in Mogadishu there are little red notices announcing the words of President Mohamed Siyad Barre: «We have chosen Scientific Socialism because it is the only way for the rapid transformation of the country into a developed and economically advanced nation.»

The Somali people have always been tolerant of foreigners and in fact are well known for lavish hospitality and uninhibited welcome to strangers. This tradition is vivified in our foreign relations with alien residents at a time when the whole world is infested with xenophobic tendencies and clanish attitudes. One can observe this in any publication on Somalia.

AFRICA DIGEST writes:

«There has been no official move to expel the foreign traders or have their shops Somalianized. The Somali trader has already established himself by his own initiative and the polygot immigrant communities have intermixed.

«Some of the Italians, who form three quarters of the 3,000 foreign community, have lived all their lives in the country. Many talk a fluent Somali and

do humble jobs as mechanics, shopkeepers, and teachers. There are tiny Italian bakeries producing crips and bread rolls and wayside cafe-bars where clients stand up to sip their cappucino on the way to work, or relax at the tables outside in the shade of the tree-lined streets...».

On the same subject, LES AFRICAINES says:

«The question must be brought up that the new Government has never practised an xenophobic policy. The foreigners living in the country do not suffer from any discrimination. They have the same laws and the same rules as the inhabitants. The particular type of colonialisation which Somalia underwent, did not lead to the constitution of great enterprises, but favoured the development of a colony based on familiar exploitation. A small number of these colonials left the country at the moment of independence. The others continued to carry out their activities, and became integrated in the general way of things. They do not seem to regret their decision. Obviously, since the 1969 Revolution, this order is aiming at raising national interest.»

SELF-RELIANCE

In July 5, 1973 the SRC President Jaalle Siyad, launched the sand dune stabilization project. While the rest of the world became more aware of what desertification and drought were doing to the human and animal populations of Western Sahel countries of Africa, the Somali Democratic Republic went on unobtrusively mending its own fences. Stopping the shifting dunes, along the coastal belt running parallel to the Mogadishu-Kismayo road which threaten to smother the rich agricultural Lower Shabelle basin is indeed a mammoth undertaking, but the success so far achieved underscores the immense importance of the Revolution's Self-help policy. AFRICA again tackles this subject but seemingly with a tongue in the cheek. The following article, titled «SOMALIA: STOPPING SAND DUNES», appeared in issue No. 32 April 1974:

«A visiting journalist in Somalia these days is likely to be invited to see the sand dunes stabilisation project at Shalambod, some 70 miles south of Mogadishu - so far the country's most spectacular Self-help Scheme. When I was there recently on a Friday which is rest day in Somalia, I saw what must have been about five thousand people of both sexes busily planting shrubs and cacti amidst a chorus of singing, chanting, drum-beating and horn-blowing.

«Propelled by the wind blowing inwards from the Indian Ocean the sand dunes travel about 15 yards a year, and they now threaten to engulf an important highway as well as farmland and village houses. Putting in shrubs, a sturdy and fast growing species called Casuarina, on top of sand dunes to act as wind-breaks and spreading cacti on the slopes to solidify the sand is a Somali idea.

«I was shown shrubs that had been in top soil for a month or so. They were already sprouting green while the cacti on the slopes were growing and proliferating fast. I had to admit that the idea worked, although the shrubs must be brought in from long distance, as well as top soil and fertilizer.

«But what about the social cost of taking so many people out of their normal lives and bringing them here in government-provided lorries, their enthusiasm drummed up by red-scarved Victory Pioneers (Guulwadayaal) to dig, push the barrow and pass on buckets? Will not their proper work suffer if they are not used to such physical labour? Many of the volunteers on the day I was at Shalambod were office workers from Mogadishu.

«To us the economic utility of volunteer labour is a secondary consideration», Mr. Rabileh (Director General of the Ministry of Livestock, Forestry & Range) said, 'I agree that it may be even counter-productive in

some cases to ask people to do the work they had never done before. But the most important thing is that people feel they take part in nation-building".

«I was vividly reminded of the films I saw of the Chinese, or North Koreans, working on their projects, like human ants. Somalia is the first country in the individualist African and Moslem worlds to attempt anything like it on such a scale.

«The best hotel in Mogadishu, the Juba, has been constructed mainly by using such labour and many roads and houses were built up and down the country on a self-help basis. The new, five-year Development Plan, 1974-78, places even greater emphasis on «self-reliance».

«Still there is a difference, I thought between China and Somalia. In China people work in this way as a matter of daily routine; in Somalia they only do it for some 7 hours a week, as a personal contribution to the national cause.

«The uninhibited answers I received when I interviewed the volunteers at random confirmed that genuine enthusiasm was there, even though it would have been clearly imprudent for anyone to refuse the call to patriotic exertion. All the same most of the people seemed to enjoy the fun of being together and doing something different while at the same time giving pleasure to the authorities.

«The Somalis are an intensely patriotic and culturally homogeneous-race. But the nation's leaders, including President Siyad Barre himself, frequently point the way by joining the toiling masses, shovel in hand.

«The scheme is part of a large «reforestation, soil erosion control and dunes stablisation» project carried out by the Somali Ministry of Livestock, Forestry and

Range. The sand dune scheme covers 700 hectares, in the Genale area, and about a million shrubs or trees are planted to arrest the sand.

«In the Berbera region, in northern Somalia, some 3,000 hectares of plantations are being established under the project. Here, about three million seedlings of the «conocarpus lancifolius» are planted to meet local demand for fuel and timber. The action is needed to make up for the neglect of the centuries in the course of which the formerly rich and dense forests in the Horn of Africa were gradually thinned out or destroyed by indiscriminate tree felling and charcoal making. In addition, uncontrolled grazing has considerably reduced the shrub areas.

«The third part of the government project, at Gaanlibah, on the northern plateau, not far from Hargeisa, is more concerned with controlling soil erosion and watershed improvements. Terracing and construction of check-dams and retaining walls figure prominently in the activities. Here too some 3 million tree seedlings will be planted.

«The requirements in the three areas were examined by a FAO mission in 1972, following which the Somali Government proposed the labour-intensive project. Over 6.300 people are finding casual or permanent employment in the project, not counting the Friday volunteers. Yet the cash outlay for wages in the three-year period will be only 193,000 dollars, or about 30 dollars per workman! World Food Programme is contributing nearly one million dollars worth of food to be distributed over the period to 31,600 labourers and members of their families.»

LES AFRICANIES wrote this piece:

«The Crash Programme, set off by experts and technicians, nationals on the whole, is carried out in all parts of the country on the surface of 677.000 km^2. Here some banana trees will be planted, elsewhere soya, vegetables, etc. are planted. The execution in based

on the voluntary work. That is why, on the national day, the President invited his guests to visit certain fields, about 60 or 80 km from Mogadishu, where large areas had been cleared out, laboured and irrigated.

«A canal of irrigation, 28 km long, was built by shovel, hoe without the intervention of machinery, with the strength of men, women and children. The lands thus cleared are menaced by sand dunes which the wind causes. On the national day, trucks carried thousands of people to these zones, as voluntary workers.

«From dawn to dusk, these trucks dropped this soil on the sand dunes. How many men, women and children were there, for their work under a scorching sun? Eight thousand? Ten thousand? May be more hidden in the sand dunes. All voluntary? Otherwise they would have been more, because in Mogadishu 400,000 inhabitants were on holiday.

«A few kilometers from there, also in the framawork of the Crash Programme, nomads beat the wheat they have grown. The aim here is to settle the wandering population and interest them in seasonal cultivation. There seems to be no objection.»

The DAILY NEWS of Tanzania is another paper that reported the immense task of sand dune stabilization:

«Somalia is an arid country where pockets of arable land are extremely valued. However, one of the fertile land in Schalambod is being invaded by sand dunes which keep eating it away and threatening villages and a main road.

«Workers, peasants and the entire national leadership, every Friday flock to Schalambod to plant cacti on the sand dunes. It is an arduous task cover ing some 100 kms.

«If the saying that 'Somalis are capable of great endurance and able to carry on and live under great privation' is to be proved right, you have to visit Schalambod.»

ECONOMIC BOOM

It is rather unusual to describe a poor developing country as booming but that is exactly what practically all the papers and magazines say about Somalia. The economic "miracle" in the Somali Democratic Republic can be indeed considered phenomenal when one realises that the Suez Canal has been closed for almost seven years and Somali bananas — which form the second largest export earner after livestock — have to be transported all the way round the Cape of Good Hope to Europe.

Alan Rake, of Gemini News Service, who visited Mogadishu in March 1973, reported in JERUSALEM POST, Israel (27 May 1973) an article entitled «The new Somalia is booming». The same article was picked up by AFRICA DIGEST (June 1973).

«Somalia has seen three and a half years of tough, energetic, military government since the revolution on

October 1, 1969. President Siyad has preached a fiery, new, Marxist ideology and has tried to grab his country by the scruff of its neck and impose discipline, dedication and development.

«A Revolution was needed in traditional Somalia, where the vast majority of the three million population are proud, cattle-rearing nomads; kings of the thin scrubland where they have wandered for centuries.

«Soon the nomads will be driving their cattle to projected state farms and World Bank fattening centres, where the animals will be kept on irrigated pastures and fed modern feedlots until ready for export.

«President Siyad has declared military style campaigns to eradicate tribalism, and to get the people to work and transform the economy into a modern state.

«We still have a long way to go, but are getting a decisive grip on the economy. For the first time since independence the budget has shown a surplus. Exports of livestock and meat are **booming** and reserves, which were practically extinguished under civilian rule, sinking to 6 m. Somali shilling, in 1965, have risen year by year under the soldiers doubling last year to 264 m.

«No longer is Somalia a banana economy, reeling under the closure of the Suez Canal. Though the banana trade is healthy, with Italy taking its quota and new markets opening in the Arab states, livestock is now by far the most important export and the giant Russian-built meat factory at the southern port of Kismayo is canning meat to capacity, with plans for vast expansoin in frozen meat and corned beef.

«The Somalis have a smart explanation for the recent export boom. Since th estate has taken over

the whole of the import sector, the local importers have simply switched their attention to the export trade and provided an extraordinary example of nationalization paying-off immediately.»

In the field of economic development AFRICA has produced a number of informative articles that discuss all aspects of the current economic activities in the country, apart from spotlight surveys prepared with the help of the Ministry of Information. «SOMALIA: PROMISING DEVELOPMENT» was the title of an artiele in issue No. 30 February 1974 which discussed primary economic sectors in the current five-year plan:

«The Government, assisted by a comprehensive range of surveys, experiments and pre-investment work made under United Nations Development Projects and covering human and animal health, farming, fisheries, rangeland development, skin and hide industries, geology, education and training of different kinds, as well as other activities, has produced enough evidence and documentation to make Somalia a land of plenty...»

Since the birth of the Blessed Revolution in Somalia, western press circles propagated the fallacy that Somalia has gone into isolationism. Nothing has been far from the truth. In fact the number of heads of State that visited Mogadishu in the last four years of the Revolution far exceed all those dignitories that came to our shores prior to this short period. Perhaps what western pressmen missed was the constant stream of Somali politicians that roamed world capitals asking for more. This isolationist idea is suggested by the title «OPENING THE DOOR» which appeared in AFRICA issue No. 27 November 1973, but the subject matter speaks for itself:

«Somalia, her trade and agriculture booming as world prices for livestock and bananas, which are the main exports, are soaring, is considering fresh ways to attract foreign private investments. A Somali go-

vernment spokesman told AFRICA the latest legislation on investment dates from 1968, that is a year before the new government took over, and no longer gives justice to dynamic progress and opportunities that have since arisen.

«The present investment code restricts the right of transfer home of profits in any one year to 15 per cent of the capital initially invested in the business, while in case the profits do not reach that level the difference can be added to the remittance over a period of three years. But owing to the very good showing of the balance of payments, now well in the black, and rising reserves of convertible currency, standing at £ 17 million by the end of 1972 or sufficient to cover more than six months' imports, repatriation of profits could be further eased or made entirely free. Foreign investment is already protected against nationalization, which is only permitted in case of important public interest with compensation payable.»

In AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL (December 14, 1974), a long article again shows how Revolutionary Somalia is successfully tackling numerous economic problems:

«The economy is, it is true, now dominated by the government and cooperative sectors, but private enterprise foreign and domestic, has an assured place for the foreseeable future.

«However, some very real advances have been made in Somalia over the past four years.

«The government has mounted a nation-wide campaign to expand and improve agricultural production and many Crash Programmes, staffed by young volunteers, have been set up. The acreage under plough has been considerable extended, although there is scope for a further, twenty-fold, expansion of the present 400,000 hectares under cultivatin. The gov-

ernment aims at making the country entirely self-sufficient in basic food items, including rice, maize, wheat, flour and edible oils in three years. Thousands of acres of cash crops put under cotton which is becoming the country's leading cash crop and improved spraying methods make possible the growing of medium-staple cotton on a commercial scale.

«The standard of living of the average Somali undoubtedly increased over the past four years, if all aspects of life are taken into consideration.»

In the PEOPLE'S DAILY (November 7, 1973) of Peking, the following article which emphasizes agricultural development appeared:

«In the past four years, Somalia has achieved noticeable results in its agriculture. With cultivated area having reached 400.000 hectares, the state has turned out 150.000 tons of grain this year. The total output of sorghum and maize, the main grain for the Somali people, has increased from 628 tons in 1971 to 3124 tons in 1972.

«After the 21st October Revolution, in 1969, in order to develop its agriculture, Somalia set up an Agriculture Development Corporation. In a bid to decrease its imports of foreign grain, the current three-year Plan of Development, from 1971 to 1973, gives first place to diversifying crops and expanding grain production.

«Under the Crash Programme, first carried out in Feb. 1970, some farms were established and some town dwellers and nomads have turned for agricultural production. At present, the country embraces ten farms and 8,000 hectares of arable land worked by 9.000 agricultural labourers.»

HORIZONT is one of the friendly papers that like to tell Somalia's socialist achievements to the outside

world. The economic upsurge in the country after a decade of stagnation is noted by the paper:

«Somalia succeeded over the past four years in increasing its exports by 45 per cent and, more important, in reducing the foreign trade deficit from 153.9 million Somali shillings in 1969 to 109 million Somali shillings in 1972. This has been accomplished despite the fact that owing to its geographical location, exports are not very easy for that country. Thus supplies for Europe have to be shipped over the extremely long distance around Africa, because the Suez Canal is still blocked.

«Thousands of hectares of cultivable land which had been lying fallow until some years ago, have in the meantime been cultivated, primarily by the volunteers of the so-called Crash Programme. Here cooperatives are emerging which do not only aim at increasing agricultural production but create at the same time new forms of social life. Systematic work is being undertaken to improve the infrastructure, the road network is being extended, and a new port under construction in Mogadishu to replace the old one which had become completely silted.»

CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The literacy Campaign in Somalia was launched in March 1973 by the famous words of our President, Jaalle Major General Mohamed Siyad Barre, who said this which attracted widespread interest from the world press:

> «I am happy to be here today on the inauguration of the campaign against illiteracy and launch a national effort in the writing of our language after the age-old ignorance perpetrated by the colonialists... The Supreme Revolutionary Council and the Council of Secretaries have decided after long sittings to launch this campaign, so that every Somali citizen in the towns and villages (urban areas) of the regions and districts will be able to read and write by the close of this year. We also want to start next year... to teach the nomads, and thus to eradicate for ever the statistical cliche that 99% of our people are illiterate.»

Faithful AFRICA wrote this on its March issue 1973:

«Somalia took a major step which will weave the Somalis in the country and outside it into one national and cultural entity **(as if we haven't been one for all time!).** This was the introduction on January 21, 1973 of a Latin Script for the Somali language.

«The step will be followed by the implementation of «Somali as the sole official language of our country» as pledged by President Siyad Barre in his speech during the Revolution Day celebrations last October. The introduction of a script for the Somali language evidently will mean bidding goodbye to English and Italian as principal languages, which were the inevitable legacy of the country's colonial past.

«Italian and English were the only languages in which they could write official documents. This inevitably brought a cultural gap between Enblish-speaking and Italian-speaking Somalis. Moreover, the country's educational system, based on bilingual teaching, remained mostly foreign-oriented.

«To reorganise the system, introduction of a Latin script for the Somali language was considered to be a suitable answer. To implement this programme, the budget for 1973, announced last month, made an allocation of $ 150,000, while another £ 200,000 was allocated to opening schools for the purpose. Efforts will be made during the current year to ensure that the new script is developed rapidly and popularised as quickly and efficiently as possible.

«President Siyad Barre has already inagurated a Research, Preservation and Propagation Library for the Somali Language and Literature at the former headquarters of the Somali Youth League in Mogadishu. Inaugurating the centre, he said it was bought with contributions from patriotic Somalis, rich and

poor, and during the SYL regime, again it has become «the beacon of unity and brotherhood» for all Somalis.

«The President said that language was the key to education and that the only barrier now remained was the learning of the alphabet. He pointed out that the barrier which foreign languages normally posed was no more valid. The language centre, opened only a few hours before 1973 was to dawn, was considered as an apt «New Year present from the father of the revolution».

«The entire civil service was asked to sit for a preliminary examination on January 5, to judge the progress made by it during the two months since decision on the script was announced by the Somali President. A national examination was held on January 21, when the Somali language became the sole official language of Somalia. So far so good. But it will take long before the new script becomes popular, and until that time, English and Italian, will necessarily continue to rule the roost. But there is no doubt that this is a step in the right direction in so far as it will go a long way in placing the missing links in the homogeneity of the Somali culture.»

AFRICA DIGEST also took up on the cultural revolution on writing Somali and said:

«There was fierce argument in the country as to what form the written language should take. Some wanted an entirely new Somali script, others a Latin script, and the Arab priests fought vigorously for Arabic. As a third of the educated population is Arabic reading, the battle was a real one, but finally the Government acted decisively and opted for Latin.

«In October 1972 the three daily papers in Arabic, Italian and English ceased publication and the first Somali newpaper was published. For the first

few weeks every copy of the paper was a sell-out as the Somalis peered in puzzled fascination trying to recognise the new words which confronted them.

«Civil servants were given three months to master the language. Those who failed written tests were then given a further period of grace, up to April of this year. Even today many Somalis educated in one of the foreign languages find that it takes twice as long to read Somali, but government publications, literature and posters have gone over to the new language. The Somalis have found a new national ralling point, and though the purists argue about vowel sounds, most people are glad a decision has been made».

HORIZONT aptly describes the massive literacy campaign and the fantastic results accruing from it as an education explosion:

«When riding round the city or strolling liesurely across it, this sea of houses with over a quarter of a million people is simply too big — the numerous construction sites catch the eye: dwellings, public buildings, e.g. a new main post office, building for ministries and administrations, but above all schools. It is impressive to see what has been achieved especially in the educational system of this country which is nearly six times the size of the J.D.R.. The number of elementary schools rose by 107 per cent, that of secondary schools by 75 per cent. Compared to the conditions in the past, Somalia is experiencing a kind of education explosion, which is due to the systematic policy of the Supreme Revolutionary Council. While all school-age children in that country can be included only by and by the high aim of liquidating illiteracy is being pursued consistently. The introduction of the Somali written language not even a year ago also plays an essential role in the speedy development of the educational system, enabling the people of that country for the first time in their millennium-old history to write and read their language».

AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL cannot help admit the 100 per cent increase in school population within a single year:

«There has been a spectacular expansion of all manner of education, from primary schools to university. In one year alone, in 1970/71, primary school population increased by 100 per cent.

«A nation-wide literacy campaign has just been completed in urban and village centres and another is soon to be extended to the rural areas where about 70 per cent of the population lives.»

CONCLUSION

Since this booklet contains a collection of what the world press says on Somalia, there is hardly any room really for an epilogue but on the whole, there seem to be a number of recurring questions that need an official rejoinder. It is appropriate therefore to conclude this booklet with extracts of interviews and speeches of the SRC President, Jaalle Major General Mohamed Siyad Barre, that deal with the various subjects which are given widest coverage by the world press as regards Somalia in recent years. Most discussed items include our relations with socialist countries, territorial dispute with our neighbours, the writing of Somali, Self-help Schemes, as well as political and economic development.

In his First May 1974 Speech, Jaalle Siyad categorically refuted the establishment of foreign bases in Somalia. He said:

«Considering latest imperialist propaganda, it is alleged that Somalia has given a base to the Soviet Union. We haven't allowed and we will never allow foreign bases in our country. The Somali people must control their destiny and freedom, none other will be allowed to have a sway over our sovereignty. The Soviet Union gives a lot of assistance to the Somali nation and we acknowledge this. Somalia will not forget that just as we won't forget those who have harmed our interests and think that we will forgive for we will never forget and forgive...»

In an interview with AFRICA (January 1974) Jaalle Siyad said on the question of our missing lands that:

«Giving the Somalis a right of self-determination would be for us an ideal solution of the problem. As to other solutions, we have been making it abundantly clear ever since the Revolution that we favour negotiation and compromise arrived at around a conference table, in a spirit of responsibility and African brotherhood.»

The SRC Pseident added that here in Somalia we believe in African unity and work for it, promoting whatever will help the OAU in its noble aim of unifying our continent.

On self-reliance, Jaalle Siyad said in the same interview and in other press conferences that:

«Our movement for self-reliance was born at the very beginning of the Revolution in October 1969 and ever since has not ceased to contribute decisively to the nation's development. But you must realise that the movement is part and parcel of a planned strategy. We are just now ending our Three-year Development Plan and our Five-year Plan is starting so that our self-reliance schemes fit into these broader development Programmes which cover every aspect of

our national development: economic, social and political. Self-reliance means that we are making full use of our mental and physical resources in order to make true what we have been dreaming about. Participating in the self-reliance movement the people of Somalia may now feel proud to be putting into effect achievements that they have not been able to make before. This is the importance of self-reliance.»

As the Supreme Revolutionary Council has also reiterated time and again, the Charters of our Revolution clearly show in black and white that we would like to extend the hand of friendship to all countries which believe in friendship with us. That is why it is not so surprising that we have excellent relations with the Soviet Union, People's Republic of China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba and other socialist countries, as well as with many other nations including those in the West like the European Common Market. Indeed we are willing to cooperate with any country that believes in mutual respect and cooperation with Somalia, on the basis of equality and non-interference with our internal affairs.

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